

The Widow of Nain.

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BEING THE  
SUBSTANCE  
OF A  
DISCOURSE

Delivered in \* \* \* \*,

In the YEAR 1755.

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By JOHN CENNICK.

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“ His compassions fail not,” Lam. iii. 22.

“ His mercy endureth for ever,” Psalm cvi. 1.

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THE THIRD EDITION.

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THE WIDOW OF  
BEING THE  
SUBSTANTIAL  
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DISCOURSE



JOHN C. B. B. B.  
OF THE COMPASSIONATE  
THE MUSEUM OF THE  
THE THIRD EDITION  
LONDON  
Printed and Sold by the Author, at the  
Museum, No. 1, Great Russell Street, London.

“ Weep not,” LUKE vii. 13.

¶ I N the days of our Saviour's flesh, as  
I he was fulfilling his course, and walking  
about doing good, it is observed, that  
he not only preached in the synagoge,  
or in the temple, or where great multitudes re-  
sorted, but often-times seemed to go long journies  
only to speak with few, or with single persons,  
or to heal one sick, or to help a sinner ready to  
perish. He must needs go through Samaria to  
save an adulteress, and a few out of the city  
of Sychar; he would go into Jericho to save Zac-  
cheus, and be fatigued in a throng another time,  
that one poor woman might touch the hem of his  
garment; and on another day go to the pool of  
Bethesda to heal one lame man; travel along the  
road to help a blind beggar or two; and go into  
Simon's house to give a wretched woman the op-  
portunity to sit at his feet, and hear of and receive  
his free forgiveness. All this serves to shew how  
the Lord is of tender pity, and despises not the least  
soul he made. This should teach his ministers  
not to spare any pains or labour, though it should  
be to toil and spend themselves in journies, by  
land or sea, if only one single soul is thereby won  
to the kingdom of God. It should also teach eve-  
ry sinner, that though he may think little whe-  
ther he be saved or not, and though he may un-

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dervalue his own soul ; the Lord had not thought so, but spared no pains to redeem and make that neglected soul happy. Should a guilty and self-condemned man, or woman, or little child think, I am unworthy the Lord's notice, I am but as a piece of vile dust or ashes, and may justly be passed over unheeded by him that made me : He may learn from all these instances, and from all our Saviour's behaviour in the gospel, that our very hairs are numbered, and the least and [most] worthless heart is not rejected by him, or cast off, or forsaken because of his being good for nothing, and worse. A person used to affliction and crosses, can sometimes be tempted to think there is no help for me ; the Lord has forsaken me ; he has cast me aside as a dog ; my God has forgotten me : for their sakes therefore he saith in the prophet Isaiah, " A woman can forget her sucking child, but I can never forget thee ;" as if he would say, However small and mean thou art in thine own eyes, however despicable and invaluable in the eyes of others, thou art dear to me ; I have esteemed thee precious ; I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.

We were all to him like grasshoppers, and as a drop of the bucket, or as a little grain of dust on the ballance compared with his heavenly worlds and their hosts ; but yet he would not see us perish as a thing of nought, but [from] the beginning his eternal mercies moved him to be our Saviour, and to help a people who had no other friend, and who could not help themselves. He saw us, as it is said in Ezekiel, " in our blood," i. e. in our sin and ruin, when no eye pitied us,  
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nor could do any thing to wash us or cover us; and he had compassion on us; and though he knew he could have made a better world with a word, and though he knew what a poor unthankful race we should prove, it did not shut up the bowels of his everlasting love, but he would become our Saviour. Nor this alone, but if only one soul had sinned, the least and poorest that ever was, rather than that soul should have perished without any means of help, he would have as freely left his throne, and suffered, as for all the whole creation. Who can read the gospel and not see that this is his very heart? If a Magdalene came weeping behind him, he was overcome, and must pardon her. When a dying rebel after all his blasphemy, and hardened behaviour, began to relent and beg to be remembered in his intercession, his heart yearned, and he took him strait into his favour. The tears and distress of Saul made him hasten away Ananias to speak comfortably to him. Even the outward troubles and sicknesses which oppressed such as he saw in the streets, or who came to him, so touched him, that nothing is more frequently repeated all through the gospel than such expressions, "Jesus had compassion on him; I have compassion on the multitudes;" and he bids the dæmoniac tell his friends, how the Lord had had compassion on him; and this tenderness of nature made him heal all, of whatever disease they had, whether it was, spiritual or bodily, so that the report of his merciful behaviour was blazed about, insomuch that when they came to be helped, and could not get to him for the press, or were blind, and could not find their way to him, or were lepers, and were afraid to come near to him, they

they cried out, "Jesus have mercy on us!" Lord have mercy upon me! Lord pity me! intimating by the very manner of their speaking, that they had been told of his tender behaviour to others, and begged the same grace; as if they had said, Lord Jesus! thou hast helped others in their deplorable state, O help us! O have mercy on us too! Indeed all our Lord's words, his actions, his carriage, proved him to be the same proclaimed of old to the fathers, "The Lord gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great goodness; him whose compassions fail not, he whose mercy endureth from one generation to another.

Though he is and was a just God, yet he delights in mercy, and is touched to the heart with the miseries of his poor people. How far this has been visible, we may see in his behaviour at the grave of Lazarus, when he saw the grief of the two sisters of the deceased, and beheld one weeping at his right hand, and the other at his left, his meek heart melted, and Jesus wept too. He considered their distress, and remembered sin had been the cause of all this trouble. Had there been no sin, there could have been no death, nor sorrow, nor sighing; therefore his friends and enemies, his angels and apostles could see how God pitied his children in their fallen state, nor did he cease groaning in spirit before all the Jews, till they observed it, and said, "Behold how he loved him!" And when nothing could dry up the sister's tears whom he loved, but recalling of their brother, he made use of his Almighty Divinity, and spoke him again into life.

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But though this was a most special mark and proof of the Lord's great tenderness and pity, there is in the word preceeding the text, another edifying and singular relation of Jesus Christ's tender mercy, which I shall this day speak of, and must pray all to hear with the utmost attention.

As he was one day entering the city, called Nain, with many of his disciples, and many other people, he met at the gate of the city the corpse of a dead man, whom they were carrying out to his burial, and many of the people of the city attended the solemn procession. The man was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and it appears by what our Saviour spoke to her, that she followed her son weeping and lamenting greatly. This sight so effected the Redeemer, that it seemed hard to say who felt most, the childless mother or the God who created both; he could not suffer to see how the tears run down her aged cheeks, nor could he bear to hear her sobs and sighs; as the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and went up to her, and said, "Weep not," and stopped the bier, and called back the young man, and gave him alive to his else inconsolable mother. This whole account has somewhat extraordinary in it, so that I am obliged to expatiate a little on it, and call you to look on and consider it. I have no doubt but this was one great end, if not the only one, the Lord Jesus had in coming to Nain, namely to comfort this poor widow. He knew when her husband was called from her, and knew she had been a woman of a sorrowful spirit, and met with many sharp and

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cutting afflictions and trials, but was comforted in her child, who was, in her widowhood, in the stead of a husband to her, and who, perhaps, was not only her only son, but the last child she had living, and as Benjamin was the darling, and, as it were, the life of good old Jacob, so was this man the life and comfort of his mother, and her heart seemed wrapped up in him, so that when he was taken away, she became desolate indeed, and of all women the most miserable. All this Jesus knew, and in the multitude of his mercies resolved to comfort her, and at the same time let her know the Lord had had compassion on her, that so she might not only receive back her son, but feel and know her Maker was her husband, who had seen her affliction, and was come to deliver her; but he suffered it to go far before he interposed to relieve her. He often lets things go to the farthest, and when, to all appearance, there is no remedy, he makes bare his arm and stretches out his hand to save; and this he does that we might know our help standeth in the name of the Lord that made heaven and earth. Thus oftentimes it seemed as if the children of Israel in their battles would be totally defeated and overborne by the enemy, but when they cried to him, he soon made all their adversaries know, that the God of Jacob was Almighty, and, had as it were, the strength of an unicorn. So when Peter seemed ready to sink, and was just on the brink of being drowned, Jesus stretched out his hand and saved him: and thus he does by many hundreds and thousands in the time of their trouble, he lets the souls come into extremity, so that they can feel and know that no one less than God Almighty can help them, and then  
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makes his grace and power known in helping them; and this he does for his own name and honour's sake, that we might give him his due praise, and not fancy we have helped ourselves, or that our case was such, that out of it men or angels could have redeemed us. No, all who are saved in Jesus, have first felt and been convinced by the Holy Ghost, that without him their pain was perpetual and their wounds incurable.

After this his wonted manner, then, he dealt with this widow. It was the custom of the Jews to have their burying-places without the gates of their city; and no sign of help appeared, till the woman was just come to the place where she was to take the long farewell of her child, her only son.

I dare say, before Jesus met her, had any looked on as she passed the streets of Nain, they would have seen her wringing her hands, with her grey hairs hanging over her face, while floods of tears flowed down from her swollen eyes; I suppose many of the people, who followed the corpse with her, strove to comfort her, but all was in vain. It was to her as if the whole world was dead and lost to her. Methinks I see her striking upon her breast with utmost grief, and bemoaning her hard fate; methinks I hear her say to those that would have comforted her, O call my name Marah, for God hath dealt bitterly by me. It has pleased him to take away my husband, and now, in my old age, when my son, my only son, should have supported and been a comfort to me, lo! he has cut him off and left me desolate with-

out a friend, or husband, or child, to go down with my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave ! O my son, would to God I had died for thee, my son, my son !

Jesus felt her pain and anguish, and hastened to meet her. He might think, this will be my poor mother's case not many days hence ; Joseph is gone, and when she beholds me dying, a sword will pierce through her soul, and force her to cry out like this poor widow who is in bitterness for her only child. Thus can he pity one who loses his friend, and that widow who must follow her last child to the grave. Thus he can pity a child who loses a dear parent ; and much more can he pity such as feel the loss of his presence, and who mourn for him whom they have pierced, as one mourns for his first-born.

I had said that Jesus felt her sorrow ere she appeared in sight ; but what his heart endured, or how deeply he was touched on that account, none knew till he drew nigh the city-gate, and then all his disciples were witnesses how much it affected him, for "when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."

O ! methinks I see the dear Lord Jesus with the tears ready to burst out of his own eyes, going up to the woman ; methinks I see the concern of his heart in his meek looks, and hear him saying, O do not weep, thy cries cut my very heart ; I cannot bear thy tears ; I know thy forsaken state ; I know thou art desolate, and hast lost thy only son, but I will give him to thee again, only be comforted



forted and cease thy lamenting ; thy God has compassion on thee ; he pities thee and loves thee ; “ Weep not,” but wipe away thy tears, and lift up thy drooping head, thy son shall live again, I will raise him up, and thou shalt know that the Lord has seen thy affliction, and will ease thee and comfort thee.

I doubt not but at first the woman could not hope, but thought it far too good news to be true, till she saw Jesus stop the bearers of the corpse, and he came and touched the bier (and they that bare him stood still), and he said, “ Young man, I say to thee, arise, and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak ; and he delivered him to his mother.” In this miracle the Godhead of Christ shone forth bright indeed ; for when the prophets did their wonders, or performed any great cure, it was done in the name of their God, they generally called on the Lord, and let all see it was not by their own power that the sick were cured, or the dead raised. Thus the apostles used the name of the Lord Jesus, and in his name did all their miracles, and ever preached it, “ Be it known unto you all, that through Jesus Christ’s name is this man made whole ;” even our Lord himself in doing many of his amazing works, in his usual humiliation, prayed to his Father, and learned obedience, as if he had been a servant ; and this was seen in a measure at the resurrection of Lazarus, for he looked up to heaven and besought his Father to hear him before he called the dead man to life ; but in this account, as the Lord and God of the living and of the dead, he demands the prey out of the mouth of the lion, as  
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it were, and death knew who spake, when he said, "Young man, I say to thee, arise:" And death delivered up his captive at his word. Thus shall it be in the last day; no sooner shall he, who is Lord of death and hell, command both to give up their dead, but all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth. This act of our Saviour's, as well as the manner in which he did it, like the raising of Lazarus in much the same way, must then be our invincible argument, that he is the resurrection and the life, and that neither death, nor the grave, nor hell, nor satan, nor any spiritual bondage, nor sin, nor darkness, nor misery, nor fear, nor pain, can confine a soul a moment longer when he says, "Loose him and let him go." This must teach us in all times of trial to apply directly to him. Are we in bondage through the fear of death, or through the sin that most easily besets us? he only can say, be thou loosed from thine infirmity, and it shall be done. Are we drawing near the time of our change? He that tasted death himself, and met it in its most frightful dress, and who sunk down into it, surrounded with all its terrors, he can order it so, that we shall not be holden of death a moment, nor so much as see or taste of it, but have it so sweetened and altered to us, that it shall be only like the open door out of our exile and banishment into the chamber of our Bridegroom, and into our everlasting rest.

Satan and death would laugh to scorn all our courage, and mock all our resolution and bravery, if Jesus did not arm us with his armour, and with divine authority make his voice heard.

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I say unto thee, Death ! and to thee, Hell ! hurt not mine anointed, let my servant go free.

And when the young man was raised to life, and sat up in his coffin, he began to speak, and his mother began to praise the Lord ! He had turned all her mourning away in a moment, and instead of the voice of weeping and lamentation, there was heard nothing but the voice of thanksgiving and rejoicing. I do not doubt but the Holy Spirit, who had made her sighs so prevalent, before now made her see who Jesus was ; all glorified God, and many of them that were witnesses of this charitable and merciful miracle, thought a great prophet is risen among us ; but it seems as if more was meant by that remarkable expression used by some, " God has visited his people." Who knows but this tenderness of our Saviour was the means of saving eternally the mother, the son, and many of those who were at this happy opportunity ; for I cannot help believing that our Saviour, who so pitied persons in sickness, in bonds, in pain, in sorrow, which were only temporal trials and burdens, much more pitied their spiritual estate, and often made these the means of bringing them to him, and humbling their souls at his feet, that he might make them know who he was, and that he might give them eternal salvation.

All the many examples and proofs of his love to the children of men, are therefore noted and handed down to us, that his long-suffering might lead unthinking and careless mortals to repentance, and comfort such as are in distress, and encourage



courage them, with all their afflictions and miseries, to go to Jesus, who was and is acquainted with grief, and whose delight and pleasure is to deliver such as are ready to perish. O let it have this effect upon us in our trials. Let us remember the Lord has compassion on us, and he [who] would go to Nain to comfort a poor desolate widow once in the days of his flesh, is the same now, and will surely comfort us. All the afflictions, misfortunes, or grievous things which befall us in this world, are known fully to him, and when they have served the end for which they were sent or suffered, he delivers us out of them. Be not any of you therefore cast down and dejected too much, when your dearest relations are called away, or when all things seem to make against us; do not rashly conclude the Lord deals hardly with you, or that he resolves to make all your days bitter through afflicting visitations, crosses, or troubles, but learn, that your good things are in a better world, and rejoice, that though heaviness may endure for a night, joy shall come in the morning. Let your disappointments below wean you from having any confidence in flesh and blood, or in any thing earthly, for all are transitory, all perish, and the most promising blessings in the world, without Jesus, are splendid lies and painted bubbles. Live you as men who have built your house upon a rock, which no wind, or storm, or flood can move, undermine or shake. Since Jesus the Lord has compassion on you, why need you be uneasy if you are used unkindly or cruelly in the world; and since he will be better to you than a father or mother, or (as Elkanah told his wife) than

than ten sons, do not be dismayed, should all you have be taken away. The Lord is the same, and when the heavens and earth are changed, and when time is no longer, he will be your everlasting God, and your portion forever.

But there are some who grieve and will not be comforted, and who are not concerned after losses, nor mourn because of any outward want or trouble, nor because their friends, husbands, wives, or kindred, or only children are dead, but because they have a heart dead to God, and who feel themselves without true life in Jesus. This is a state common to all who are awakened, and who feel the plague of their own hearts: In this condition a soul can say with the Psalmist, "My soul ran in the night season; my soul refused comfort." Such are restless indeed, such never can rest till the Lamb of God has given them a rest for their souls; they mourn, and their mourning is for him whom they have pierced, and just as a parent laments for his first-born, or like as the widow of Nain mourned for her only son, so they mourn and languish for redemption, and day and night cry out for God their Saviour; and are there any here in this case? let such know that his heart, who was so affected and touched with the woman's cries and tears, will in like manner meet them and comfort them. Thus he overtook the two brethren who were walking sad to Emmaus. He comforted them, and did not leave them till all their sorrow was turned into joy. Thus he met Magdalene in the garden, when he asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She had scarce time to tell him; she mourned her absent Lord, but Jesus called her by

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her name, and at once made her heavy heart leap for joy and gladness. The women who went weeping to the sepulchre, were told by the angels not to fear; for, said they, "Ye seek Jesus that was crucified." They knew all who looked with tears for the Lamb that was slain should surely find him. Let me in like manner then comfort you. Go on weeping after him; let not your heart or eyes rest till the moment comes when Jesus shall reveal his love to you, and bring the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. While you are waiting upon him, let his compassionate behaviour to the woman in the text encourage you; let his promise be a staff, as it were, to you; and in all your deadness of heart, in all backwardness to believe, heaviness of spirit, or desertion, sit low at his feet as objects of pity and compassion, till he say to each of you, as he did to the widow's son, "Young man, young woman, I say to thee, arise." At his word all your sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and you shall rise up to life eternal; you shall begin to speak and shew forth his praises, and tell to others what the Lord has done for you, and how the Lord, your own Lord and God, your own God has had compassion on you. May he do this for you all, to the glory of his great name, whose redeemed people and inheritance you all are. Amen.

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F I N I S.



## A P R A Y E R.

**O** THOU merciful and compassionate High Priest, who has experienced and known all the infirmities and sicknesses of thy people, and who has pity on the ignorant, and such as are out of the way, and art ready to save all who are friendless and ready to perish; look upon me, behold a poor sinner at thy feet who cannot do without thee. I am undone; I am uneasy and dissatisfied; my flesh and my heart trembles because of my sin, and I cannot be comforted. I cannot rest, nor sleep, nor wake, nor live, nor die in peace, till thou assurest me that thou hast forgiven me. Say to me as to the widow of Nain, "Weep not." Still the tempest in my breast, and grant me that peace in thee which the world cannot give. See the restless condition of my heart, and for thy tender mercy's sake grant me such a confidence in thee that I may trust and not be afraid. I know I have sinned against thee, but O have compassion on me I am nothing but sin, and unworthy and worthless, and neither can any one else help me, nor can I help myself; have mercy on me. All my desire and wish is, to feel and know thou pitiest me, and wilt save me. I am weary with sinning; I am sorry that I have lived so long disobedient; I repent (O my God! my God, thou knowest my inmost heart; thou knowest I repent), and beg for pardon. Think upon Gethsemane; think upon thy distress and agony; think upon thy uneasiness and frights in the wilderness; remember thy sorrows on Mount Calvary; remember thy wormwood and the gall;  
and

and for thy sufferings sake, for thy bitter torments  
 sake, and for the sake of thy name, thy love, thy  
 death, thy wounds and miseries, save and comfort  
 me. Teach me to wait upon thee without distrac-  
 tion, to be faithful and true; cause me to cleave  
 to thee, and never go away; and make it so clear  
 to me that I am thy beloved, and thou mine, that  
 all afflictions may be light, and easy borne with a  
 patience becoming a soul who is called by thy  
 name. Thou who art easy to be intreated, and who  
 canst not send souls empty away, fulfil my desire,  
 that I may love thee, and live to thy praise, and be  
 a witness that thou hast visited thy people, and hast  
 power on earth to forgive sins; yea do this for  
 me, that I may glorify thy dear and holy name for  
 ever. Amen.

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